

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L USNATO 2511

THIS MESSAGE TRANSMITTED FOR ESD OLAIOO (NAPO). ESA FOR
YW/YWT. AFSC FOR SD. CSAF FOR RDPW/ATF/LGP/LGF. SECDEF
FOR OASD/ISA/ILP AND ODDR&E. SECSTATE FOR EUR/RPM.
AMEMBASSY PARIS FOR DAO.

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: NATO, NAPO, OCON, AWACS
SUBJ: FRENCH POSITION ON NATO AEW

BEGIN TEXT

1. ON APRIL 27 NAPO PM AND DPM MET WITH M. JEAN BILIEU OF
SNECMA, WHO IN THE PAST HAS PROVED ACCURATE WITH RESPECT
TO SPECIFICS ON FRENCH ACTIVITIES, BUT SOMEWHAT OPTIMISTIC
WITH RESPECT TO PREDICTIONS. FOLLOWING IS A SUMMARY OF
INFORMATION HE PASSED.

2. FRENCH STUDY ON NATO AEW WAS CONDUCTED UNDER JOINT
DIRECTION OF ING. GEN COULMY (DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF STTA,
EQUIVALENT OF ESD) AND GENERAL BEAUVAIS (ASSISTANT CHIEF
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OF STAFF, ARMED FORCES). DEPUTY STUDY DIRECTOR WAS ING.
CHEF BARRE (STTA-AWADS). RESULTS WERE SUBMITTED IN MARCH
1977 TO DEFENSE MINISTER M. BOURGES. THESE EVALUATED
BENEFITS VERSUS COSTS OF FRENCH AEW PARTICIPATION AT A
LOWER FINANCIAL LEVEL THAN NATO HAD BEEN ASSUMING FOR THE
CASE WITH DFM-56 ENGINES. NATO NUMBERS PROVIDED IN 17
MARCH VISIT BY NAPO PM/DPM TO PARIS WERE INCORPORATED BY
FOOTNOTE. BOURGES' REPORTED REACTION WAS TO REQUEST
REACCOMPLISHMENT OF STUDY TO INCLUDE ALTERNATIVE AEW
SOLUTIONS, ESPECIALLY THOSE WITHOUT THE CONTROL CAPABILITY,
SUCH AS HIS UNDERSTANDING OF NIMROD. A BROADENED STUDY

IS NOW DUE TO BE RESUBMITTED IN JUNE.

3. BOURGES HAS MEANWHILE REPORTEDLY VISITED UK, DISCUSSED AEW AND FLOWN IN NIMROD (ASW VERSION).

4. BILLEN BELIEVES FRENCH CONSIDERATIONS ARE PRIMARILY FOCUSED ON PURCHASE OF THREE OR FOUR AIRCRAFT UNDER FRENCH OWNERSHIP IN CONJUNCTION WITH REST OF NATO BUY. ALSO IN HIS VIEW, ONLY DFM-56 ENGINED VARIANTS APPEAR ACCEPTABLE AND HE CLAIMS THAT INDICATIONS FROM PRESIDENT GISCARD D'ESTAING GIVE CONFIRMATION.

5. FRENCH HAD AGREED TO AEW AGENDA FOR SPECIAL MEETING OF IEPG, BUT NOW WERE UNCERTAIN WHETHER MEETING WOULD BE HELD. THEY BELIEVE THEIR BEST FORUM TO SECURE FINANCIALLY ATTRACTIVE ARRANGEMENT IS THROUGH BILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS WITH US OUTSIDE NATO CHANNELS.

6. AIR FORCE CHIEF OF STAFF GEN SAINT CRICQ MADE RECENT PUBLIC STATEMENT DESCRIBING NATO AWACS AS TOO EXPENSIVE, TOO VULNERABLE AND TOO AMERICAN. THERE APPEARS TO BE MILITARY CONCERN THAT INTRODUCTION OF NATO AEW COULD INCREASE US INFLUENCE IN EUROPEAN COMMAND/CONTROL.

7. BILLEN'S ASSESSMENT IS THAT SIGNIFICANT PROMISE FOR CONFIDENTIAL

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EVENTUAL FRENCH PARTICIPATION EXISTS SINCE THEY NOW CLEARLY RECOGNIZE A NEED FOR THE OPERATIONAL CAPABILITY. THIS PARTICIPATION WILL BE CONTINGENT UPON:

A. FRENCH STUDIES REACHING SIMILAR CONCLUSION AS 1974 NATO STUDY IN WHICH FRANCE PARTICIPATED RELATIVE TO POSSIBLE DELETION OF AWACS CONTROL CAPABILITY (INCREASES VULNERABILITY WITHOUT SIGNIFICANT COST SAVINGS).

B. FRENCH NOT BEING LED TO BELIEVE THEY CAN ACHIEVE ADEQUATE OVERLAND AND ECM CAPABILITIES THROUGH EITHER NIMROD OR E-2C.

C. FRENCH BEING ABLE TO NEGOTIATE CONCESSIONS IN COST SHARE WHILE RETAINING INDUSTRIAL PARTICIPATION, ESPECIALLY IN THE ENGINE.

8. FYI: NAPO PM/DPM WILL OFFER TO VISIT STUDY PARTICIPANTS IN PARIS AGAIN IN NEAR FUTURE TO DISCUSS ASPECTS RELATED TO ABOVE POINTS. RECOMMEND THAT ANY US PARTICIPANTS IN BILATERAL DISCUSSIONS BE PREPARED TO DISCUSS SAME.

END TEXT.STREATOR

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